



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
P.O. Box 1306, Room 6034
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R2/ARD-ES/048445

JUN 9 2011

Todd Staples, Commissioner
Texas Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 1284
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Commissioner Staples:

Thank you for your May 9, 2011, letter to the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, concerning the effects of the proposed listing of the Dunes sagebrush lizard on Texas farmers and ranchers. As Southwest Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Secretary Salazar has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The Service has proposed listing for the Dunes sagebrush lizard under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 which requires species to be listed as endangered or threatened solely on the basis of their biological status and threats to their existence. When evaluating a species for listing, the Service considers and evaluates the following five factors;

- damage to, or destruction of, a species' habitat;
- overutilization of the species for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
- disease or predation;
- inadequacy of existing protection; and
- other natural or manmade factors that affect the continued existence of the species.

When one or more of these factors threatens the survival of a species, the Service takes action to protect it. In making listing decisions, the Service uses the best available scientific and commercial data and conducts independent peer reviews of each rule. We will respond to your specific comments as part of the public notice and comment period on the proposed rule.

Voluntary agreements such as Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances that allow the Service to work with local landowners and industry are important tools for both protecting the Dunes sagebrush lizard and its habitat in a way that continues to support

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Todd Staples, Commissioner

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local landowners and economies. We value our conservation partnerships with ranchers and farmers in Texas, and the Service will continue to develop agreements and expand partnerships to conserve the Dunes sagebrush lizard in Texas.

Sincerely,

Acting 
Regional Director

Todd Staples, Commissioner

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cc: 6242-MIB-OCL

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Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office, Albuquerque, NM